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April 13, 2011

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Newsroom" (2011). *Newsroom*. 1130.  
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## Newsroom

Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern University Announces 2011 Spring Commencement Speakers

APRIL 13, 2011

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Georgia Southern University will welcome two of its alumni back to campus as Chick-fil-A President and Chief Operating Officer Dan T. Cathy and Georgia Chamber of Commerce President Chris Clark have been selected to serve as Spring 2011 Commencement speakers. The annual ceremonies are scheduled for May 13 (graduate) and May 14 (undergraduate).

Clark will serve as speaker for the University's graduate ceremony scheduled for 1 p.m., May 13 at Hanner Fieldhouse. Cathy will serve as speaker for the undergraduate ceremony scheduled for 9 a.m., May 14 at Allen E. Paulson Stadium.

"Both Dan and Chris are outstanding examples of the quality of graduates that Georgia Southern University produces and we are excited to welcome them back to campus for the upcoming Commencement ceremonies," said Brooks Keel, Ph.D., president of Georgia Southern.

As president of one of the nation's largest family owned businesses, Chick-fil-A's Cathy represents the next generation of leadership for the Atlanta-based quick-service chicken restaurant chain founded by his father, S. Truett Cathy. Eager to incorporate his own skills and talents into the business, Cathy has taken an unconventional, yet personally and professionally rewarding approach to Chick-fil-A leadership.

Since February 2001, Cathy has served as the president and chief operating officer of the 1,540-plus unit chain, personally challenging himself with upholding Chick-fil-A's efforts to provide genuine, heartfelt hospitality, while also ensuring that customers have an exceptional dining experience.

Rather than leading from his corporate office in Atlanta, Cathy chooses to spend the majority of his time traveling to the chain's growing family of restaurants and interacting with Chick-fil-A's committed team of restaurant operators and team members. His actions stem from the belief that working in the field provides a clearer understanding of the ever-evolving wants and needs of Chick-fil-A customers, and leading from the front line also enables him to personally convey his servant spirit to the chain's 57,000-plus employees.

Cathy's nearly lifelong career at Chick-fil-A began at age nine as he sang songs for customers and made radio commercials for the chain's original "Dwarf House" restaurant in Hapeville, Ga.

After receiving his Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Georgia Southern, Cathy returned to Chick-fil-A where he served as director of operations – opening more than 50 new Chick-fil-A restaurants throughout the country. As Chick-fil-A continued to grow, so did Cathy's responsibilities with the company. He has served as senior director of operations, vice president of operations and executive vice president prior to being named president and chief operating officer.

A native of Jonesboro, Ga., Cathy is married to the former Rhonda Palmer and has two sons, Andrew and Ross.

Georgia Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Chris Clark, a native of Fitzgerald, Ga., earned his Bachelor of Science degree in political science from Georgia Southern and a Master of Public Administration degree from Georgia College and State University.

*He is an advisory board member for the University of Georgia's Board of Visitors, an advisory board member for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at Georgia Southern, a graduate of Georgia's first executive leadership program and the former president of the Georgia Economic Developers Association. He served previously as Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, executive director of the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority and also as deputy commissioner for global commerce at the Georgia Department of Economic Development.*

He, his wife Tiffany and son Christian reside near Peachtree City in Fayette County.

### May Commencement Ceremony Details

Due to a continued increase in the number of spring graduates , Georgia Southern will, for the first time, split the spring ceremony – one for graduate students earning their master's, doctorate or specialist's degree and one for undergraduates earning a bachelor's degree.

Friday, May 13

Graduate Ceremony

1 p.m.

Hanner Fieldhouse

Saturday, May 14

Undergraduate Ceremony

9 a.m.

Allen E. Paulson Stadium

For guests and family members who are unable to attend a ceremony, Georgia Southern will provide a live Webcast of each via the University Web site, [www.georgiasouthern.edu](http://www.georgiasouthern.edu). Each broadcast will begin prior to the scheduled start of the ceremony.

For more information on Georgia Southern's Spring Commencement ceremonies, visit: [www.georgiasouthern.edu/commencement](http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/commencement).

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